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ABSTRACT

The Women in Nontraditional Trades (WINT) project has implemented a new skills training program for women in the Philippines. It is being pilot tested in two regional training centers of the National Manpower and Youth Council in central Mindanao and southern Luzon. A major component of the WINT project is the provision of skills training for women in the trades. Options for self-employment are also provided. Other project activities include job placement assistance, training for placement officers and vocational guidance officers, and transportation of trainees. The project has trained 600 women. Large companies have shown flexibility and willingness to employ women in nontraditional jobs. Obstacles to gender equality in training and employment are inadequate and ineffective implementation of existing policies and women's lack of awareness of training opportunities and rights. Women continue to get lower pay due to employment in lower-skill job categories. Rural women remain invisible farmers who tend to be displaced by mechanization and very limited access to credit, agricultural services, training, and technology. Employed women suffer from business retrenchment and shutdowns in the manufacturing sector. A Philippine development plan for women addresses the concerns of women for equality and development across six major spheres: individual, family, sociocultural, economic, political, and legal. (YLB)

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FILIPINO WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

JOSE D. LACSON
Director-General

I SHALL BEGIN WITH A SHORT STORY. A REAL, NOT FICTIONAL, STORY OF TINA PAGUINGAN, 30 YEARS OLD , MARRIED, AND MOTHER TO FOUR CHILDREN. TINA LIVES IN MINDANAO, ONE OF THE MAJOR ISLAND GROUPS IN MY COUNTRY. SHE IS A WELDER.

TINA'S STORY:

> I APPLIED IN A TRAINING CENTRE'S WELDING COURSE WITHOUT MY HUSBAND'S KNOWLEDGE. I DID THIS FOR ECONOMIC REASON. I WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO MY HUSBAND'S INCOME. WHEN ACCEPTED, I DECIDED TO TELL MY HUSBAND. HE WAS ANGRY, BUT I INSISTED ON TAKING THE COURSE TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER MEN AND WOMEN. ON THE FIRST DAY OF OUR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING WHERE THE WOMEN WELDERS WERE GIVEN A TEST, THE MALE EMPLOYEES WATCHED US. WE PASSED THE TEST AND GAINED THEIR RESPECT. I APPLIED IN A CORPORATION AS A CONTRACTUAL WORKER AND WAS ACCEPTED. NOW, I HAVE MY OWN PAYCHECK. MY HUSBAND APPROVES OF MY WORK, AND I ENJOY LIFE.

* Chief Executive Officer of the National Manpower and Youth Council, a government authority and lead agent in skills development in the Philippines

** Paper delivered during the American Vocational Association Convention/International Vocational Education and Training Association Conference 6-10 December 1991

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TINA IS ONE OF THE WOMEN-GRADUATES OF WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL TRADES (WINT), A PROJECT OF THE NATIONAL MANPOWER AND YOUTH COUNCIL (NMYC). THE WINT PROJECT WHICH BEGAN IN 1989 IS A MULTI-BILATERAL PROJECT FUNDED BY THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF THE NETHERLANDS THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. THE PROJECT STARTED IMPLEMENTING A NEW SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR WOMEN WHICH AIMS TO INCREASE THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE CREATION OF BROADER AND MORE DIVERSIFIED RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS FOR WOMEN, INCLUDING THEIR PREPARATION FOR HIGHER LEVEL EMPLOYMENT, HIGHER RESPONSIBILITY AND PAY. THIS PHILIPPINE PROJECT AROSE FROM THE INITIATIVES OF ASIAN PACIFIC COUNTRIES IN A SEMINAR HELD IN TOKYO, JAPAN BY THE ILO AND THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN IN 1987.

THE PROJECT IS BEING PILOT TESTED IN TWO REGIONAL MANPOWER TRAINING CENTRES OF THE NATIONAL MANPOWER AND YOUTH COUNCIL IN CENTRAL MINDANAO AND SOUTHERN LUZON WITHIN A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS. THE CHOICE OF THE PILOT REGIONS WAS BASED ON AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE FAMILY INCOME AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THESE AREAS.

A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE WINT PROJECT IS THE PROVISION OF SKILLS TRAINING WHERE WOMEN ARE TRAINED IN TRADE SKILLS ALONGSIDE WITH THE MEN IN ELECTRICITY, WELDING, FURNITURE, AUTOMOTIVE TRADES, REFRIGERATION AND AIRCONDITIONING, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF OFFICE EQUIPMENT, MASONRY AND CARPENTRY. OPTIONS FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT ARE ALSO PROVIDED TO THE TRAINEES THROUGH THE TRAINING FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT (TREND) PROGRAM OF THE NMYC.

THE PROJECT PROVIDES TRAINING SUPPORT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION MATERIALS TO BE USED IN INFORMATIONAL AND MOTIVATIONAL CAMPAIGNS FOR ATTITUDINAL CHANGE.

JOB PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE FOLLOWS UP SKILLS TRAINING AND TRADE SKILLS TESTING. INTENSIVE TRAINING COURSES ARE HELD FOR PLACEMENT OFFICERS AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE OFFICERS TO IMPROVE THEIR CAPABILITY TO HANDLE RELEVANT FUNCTION.

THE WOMEN TRAINEES ARE ALSO ASSISTED BY THE PROJECT WITH TRANSPORTATION, ACCOMODATION COSTS AND WORK UNIFORMS.

THE PROJECT IS A FORMIDABLE TASK BUT VALUABLE INPUTS FROM VARIOUS COOPERATORS FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT.

TO DATE, A TOTAL OF 600 WOMEN HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY THE PROJECT.

WINT EXPERIENCE IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES PARTICULARLY FOR WOMEN WELDERS SHOWS AN EMERGING TREND AMONG BIG COMPANIES, I.E., THEIR FLEXIBILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO EMPLOY WOMEN IN JOBS TRADITIONALLY PERFORMED BY MEN. AS THE NUMBER OF THESE COMPANIES GRADUALLY INCREASES, THE PROJECT ENVISAGES THE LESSENING OF GENDER-BASED JOB RECRUITMENT AND THE START OF SKILLS/CAPABILITY-BASED ENTRY INTO EMPLOYMENT IN INDUSTRY.

IT IS STILL TOO SOON TO ASSESS THE WHOLISTIC EFFECT OF THIS PROJECT BUT SIGNIFICANT INDICATORS HAVE BEEN MANIFESTED BY THOSE INVOLVED AND PRIMARILY BENEFITTING FROM THE PROJECT.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE SKILLED WOMEN WORKERS BY THEIR EMPLOYERS REVEALS POSITIVE RESULTS.

THE WOMEN GRADUATES, PEERS, TRAINORS, PARENTS AND EMPLOYERS TRANSCENDED THE BARRIERS OF TRADITION TO PROVIDE GENDER EQUALITY IN TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

THERE ARE STILL MANY OBSTACLES TO CLEAR, HURDLES TO OVERCOME.

ACCORDING TO OUR PHILIPPINE BUREAU OF WOMEN AND YOUNG WORKERS, INADEQUATE AND INEFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF EXISTING POLICIES RELATED TO WOMEN AND WORK ARE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT. THE BUREAU ALSO STRESSED THAT WOMEN'S LACK OF AWARENESS OF EXISTING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND WOMEN'S RIGHT CONTRIBUTED TO THE LIMITED RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS FOR WOMEN.

FILIPINO WOMEN CONTINUE TO SUFFER DISADVANTAGES DUE TO PREVALANCE OF SEX-ROLE STEREO-TYPING AND OTHER BIASES AGAINST THEM.

IN EMPLOYMENT, ONLY 36 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION 15 YEARS AND OVER WHO ARE IN THE LABOUR FORCE ARE WOMEN. LEAVING OUT SOME 9.3 MILLION WOMEN WHO ARE OUTSIDE THE LABOUR FORCE AND WHO ARE CONSIDERED ECONOMICALLY UNPRODUCTIVE. LATEST ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT 74 PERCENT OF THESE WOMEN ARE HOUSEKEEPERS OR THOSE WHO ENABLE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY TO ENGAGE IN PRODUCTIVE WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME HOLDING MANAGERIAL AND EXECUTIVE JOBS.

WOMEN GENERALLY GET LOWER PAY THAN MEN DUE TO WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN LOWER-SKILL JOB CATEGORIES.

THE PHENOMENON OF OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT EXPOSES WOMEN TO GREATER DANGERS SUCH AS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND PHYSICAL ABUSE. IT ALSO PRESENTS A SERIOUS THREAT TO THEIR OWN WELL-BEING, DIGNITY AND STATUS AND IMAGE BEFORE THE WORLD, TO THE FAMILY AS AN INSTITUTION AND TO NATIONAL SELF-RESPECT.

RURAL WOMEN, WHO COMPRISE 59 PERCENT OF ALL WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINES, DESERVE PARTICULAR ATTENTION. WHILE THEY PERFORM VARIOUS PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES, THEY REMAIN AS INVISIBLE FARMERS. THEY TEND TO BE DISPLACED BY MECHANISATION AND VERY LIMITED ACCESS TO CREDIT, AGRICULTURAL SERVICES, TRAINING AND TECHNOLOGY.

OTHER DIFFERENT CONCERNS AFFECT VARIOUS GROUPS OF WOMEN WORKERS, SUCH AS CHILD CARE SUPPORT FOR WORKING MOTHERS, HAZARDOUS WORKING CONDITIONS OF THOSE ENGAGED IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN SPECIFICALLY THE TOURISM AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR, DOMESTIC SERVICE, AND THOSE IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY.

MEANWHILE, EMPLOYED WOMEN APPEARED TO HAVE SUFFERED FROM THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS RETRENCHMENT AND SHUTDOWNS IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR AS THE PROPORTION TO TOTAL WORK FORCE DECREASED.

OUR STRUGGLING STATE OF ECONOMY UNFORTUNATELY AND IN LARGE PART CAUSES THESE CONCERNS.

LOOKING AHEAD : POSITIVE STEPS

WE HAVE IN MY COUNTRY A PHILIPPINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR WOMEN WHICH ADDRESSES THE CONCERNS OF WOMEN FOR EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS SIX MAJOR SPHERES: INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND LEGAL.

ON THE ECONOMIC SPHERE, TWO SPECIFIC AREAS ARE CRUCIAL - EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING/EDUCATION. ON ONE HAND, EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIRES CREATION OF MECHANISMS

TO ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN THE FORMAL/NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING, INCLUDING THE NEED TO GIVE ATTENTION TO THE ACQUISITION OF NON-TRAIDITIONAL SKILLS FOR WOMEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRIMARY PRINCIPLE THAT MUST BE UPHELD IN EMPLOYMENT IS EQUAL PAY FOR EQUIVALENT WORK. THIS CALLS FOR INSTITUTIONALISATION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN SPECIFICALLY IN THE AREA OF GOAL SETTING TO CHANGE THE PATTERN OF SEX DISCRIMINATION IN HIRING AND PROMOTION, AND THE CREATION OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN IN THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS.

WE ARE REVIEWING OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT POLICIES TO ENABLE OUR FILIPINO WOMEN TO OBTAIN JOBS WITH HIGH RESPONSIBILITIES AND PAY. WE ARE PUTTING IN PLACE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS TO SLAY TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUR WOMEN: TO EDUCATE OUR WOMEN ON THEIR RIGHTS: TO MAKE THEM ASSERT THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT. DIVERSIFYING WOMEN'S TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN A WIDER RANGE OF OCCUPATION IS NOW GIVEN THE IMPRIMATUR BY OUR DEVELOPMENT PLANNERS. THE WINT IS A CASE IN POINT.

CONCLUSION

FILIPINO WOMEN, LIKE THEIR SISTERS IN MANY PLACES IN THE WORLD, SHARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME BURDEN. WOMEN ARE CONFRONTED BY A LEGACY OF STRUCTURES OF INEQUALITY WHICH ARE REINFORCED BY MISPERCEPTIONS THAT PRODUCED A SEEMINGLY UNENDING CYCLE THAT RETARD THE PACE OF THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, RELEGATES THEM LARGELY TO THE REPRODUCTIVE SPHERES OF LIFE, AFFORDS THEM MINIMAL CHANCES OR FAILS TO HARNESS THEIR FULL POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

THIS CYCLE MUST BE BROKEN IF WOMEN ARE TO BE EFFECTIVELY MOBILISED FOR DEVELOPMENT.

EVEN AS WE EMBRACE THIS PRINCIPLE, WE ARE AWARE THAT DIFFERENT CULTURES HAVE WIDELY DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN. THE CONCERN IS HOW WE CAN BRING ABOUT DEVELOPMENT THAT SATISFIES THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF WOMEN WHILE REMAINING SENSITIVE TO LOCAL CULTURAL NORMS.

WE IN THE PHILIPPINES INCH ON, THE HEAVY BURDENS ON US NOTWITHSTANDING. WE REPOSE GREAT HOPE ON OURSELVES THAT WE CAN REPLICATE THE STORY OF TINA OF MINDANAO, OF MY COUNTRY, A HUNDRED THOUSAND FOLD.